

The METROWEST DAILY NEWS

Clerks say many taking advantage of early voting

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The results may not be in for this election, but municipalities across MetroWest are already seeing a win for early voting in Massachusetts.

This is the first year Massachusetts voters can go to the polls on a day more convenient than Election Day. Despite the extra work for clerks across the state, early voting will most likely cut down on the poll lines on Nov. 8.

“It’s a little overwhelming, not just for this municipality but for all, because it is an unfunded mandate for this particular election,” said Marlborough City Clerk Lisa M. Thomas. “But we have had quite a few people come in, they love the convenience to cast their ballot as opposed to going to the polls. The ultimate goal is to have less people at the polls so there is more fluidity when folks go to the polls on Election Day.”

Thomas thought she would hit 22 percent of registered voters through early voting, absentee ballots and specially qualified voting. As of the end of the day on Thursday 1,534 Marlborough residents voted early. Along with absentee and specially qualified ballots, the count amounts to 11 percent of 23,331 registered voters.

She now predicts that 30 percent of the city will vote before Nov. 8.

Southborough has seen 788 voters out of 7,340 vote as of early Friday. Town Clerk James Hegarty sees the trend as a benefit for cross section of town residents.

“It’s much more convenient for people with their busy schedules,” he said. “We’ve seen young people, middle-aged people, elderly people, new residents, old-timers, you name it.”

Hegarty said his town is one of many in Massachusetts that will to keep polls open on Saturday. He echoed predictions that a large percentage of residents will take advantage of the early voting opportunity.

“We expect this to be a big number. I wouldn’t be surprised us to see us reach 1,500 plus people,” Hegarty said.

The Milford area has also seen a big early turnout. Milford had 1,252 voters come out through four days of early voting. The town of Franklin saw 10 percent, 2,305 in total, of its registered voters go out to the early polls. About 1,000 of Bellingham’s residents had voted early as of Friday.

Bellingham Town Clerk Ann Odabashian said that although it is more work for her office, she thinks early voting could be a key to getting out the vote in non-presidential years.

“If we could do it for every election, we’d probably have (voters) come more often, because a lot of the people (voting early) are people that don’t come except every four years,” Odabashian said.

The early voting period will end on Nov. 4. Local municipality clerks’ offices can provide schedules for when early voting polls are open in their community.



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